

VZCZCXRO9048
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHAH #1625 3511157
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P 171157Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3927
INFO RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6019
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3713
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3572
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4261
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1326
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4200
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001625

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN
COMMERCE FOR EHOUSE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT WORKERS SLEEPLESS IN ASHGABAT

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Long working hours are the norm for Turkmen government employees. Few agencies compensate their staff for overtime. Some higher-level officials bring bedding from home for the long nights at the office. On the plus side, long hours mean some officials can be contacted directly at night to resolve urgent matters. Still, one wonders how officials can sustain such a schedule over the long-term and remain able to function effectively. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) Despite former President Niyazov's passing, his popular slogan "We will turn our nights into working days!" remains in effect. An unwritten code prescribes state officials to work from 6:00 a.m. until late every night. The chief accountant of the government joint venture Turkmen-Turkish Bank remains at work until midnight to make sure the cash pouches from all the bank's exchange outlets reach the main office. Fear of unemployment forces her to work until late at night without payment for overtime. Few employers compensate their workers for staying on the job into the night. Senior officials provide themselves with sofas or roll-away beds at their offices for use when they are unable to go home.

¶4. (SBU) One high-ranking MFA official told us that he works every night until 11:00pm, and sometimes his children stay up that late just so they can see him. He said it was the hardest part of the job. A colleague from a European Embassy arrived at MFA one day at 5:30am to deal with one particular issue and was surprised to see the aforementioned MFA official arriving at work.

¶5. (SBU) With so many employees working late, getting a problem solved with a government office is sometimes easier at night than during the day. In a recent case, an assistant to the Minister of Civil Aviation worked with an Embassy employee at 9:00 p.m. in order to reverse a denial of overflight clearance for a private U.S. cargo carrier. Despite the late hour, the minister's assistant acted as if it was business as

usual, providing a quick and positive solution. During the day, an appropriate official can be hard to track down and matters are viewed as less pressing. Raising an issue at night gives it a sense of urgency. As it turned out, none of the senior officials at the civil aviation authority were sleeping that night, due to the arrival in Turkmenistan of three visiting heads of state. Everyone at the agency was on alert.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Turkmen government employees appear to have an exhausting modus operandi of unavoidably long work hours. Unfortunately, excessive time spent at the office does not translate into productivity, and most likely has the opposite effect. Nonetheless, employees seem willing to endure the harsh work regimen for the sake of their jobs. END COMMENT.

CURRAN